

VI. 18 Dec 84

V E N E Z U E L A

L 1

INFORMATION MINISTER, OTHER OFFICIALS DISMISSED

PA172331 Caracas Radio Rumbos Network in Spanish 2110 GMT 17 Dec 84

[By Elio Rojas]

[Text] This is a bulletin from the Presidency of the Republic Information Office issued on 17 December 1984.

According to an authorized Miraflores Palace spokesman, President Jaime Lusinchi today asked for the resignation of four top government officials who failed to take the proper measures to broadcast, according to tradition, the network transmission of the events held today, 17 December, at the National Pantheon to mark the anniversary of the death of liberator Simon Bolivar, and the solemn ceremony held in memory of the founder of our fatherland.

The top government officials whose resignations were requested by the president of the Republic are: Armando Duran, information and tourism minister; Pedro Francisco Lizardo, president of television's Channel 8; Pedro Mogna, Information and Tourism Ministry director general; and Alberto Denanton, Interior Ministry protocol and historical [word indistinct] director. In another official communique the government announced that Ignacio Iribarren Borges has been appointed as the new information and tourism minister to replace Armando Duran, and that Clemente Cohen has been appointed new director general of the Information and Tourism Ministry to replace Pedro Mogna.

It was also learned that Development Minister Hector Hurtado and Carlos Rafael Silva, president of the Venezuelan Investment Fund, requested the resignation of the director of the Enelbar Energy Company of Barquisimeto and also of the director of the Rio Turbio energy plant. Both were accused of using an intermediary to illegally obtain preferential dollars on the Differential Exchange System. The Enelbar Energy Company and Rio Turbio energy plant are state enterprises.

FBIS - LAM- 84 - 244
PROTEST NOTE ISSUED ON COLOMBIAN INCURSION

VE/CO Border

PA171604 Paris AFP in Spanish 1522 GMT 17 Dec 84

[Text] Caracas, 17 Dec (AFP) -- At 1410 GMT today, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Isidro Morales Paul delivered a Venezuelan protest note to Colombian Ambassador Alberto Zalamea over the incursion of three Colombian helicopters and 20 troops into Venezuelan territory on Thursday, 13 December.

According to reports from Caracas, the incident took place at approximately 2100 GMT at Castilletes, located 500 km northwest of Caracas on a small Venezuelan bay on the Guajira Peninsula, where the northern border of the two countries begins.

The Colombian ambassador told AFP unofficially that the craft erroneously entered Venezuelan territory while it was pursuing drug traffickers in the course of a sweeping antidrug operation.

Venezuela and Colombia are still have not resolved the delimitation of their marine and submarine areas off the Guajira Peninsula, the site of Thursday's incident.



VI. 18 Dec 84

L 2

VENEZUELA

Further Report

PA172157 Paris AFP in Spanish 1824 GMT 17 Dec 84

[By Jorge Calmet Wagner]

[Text] Caracas, 17 Dec (AFP) -- Venezuela and Colombia may sign an agreement to fight drug trafficking on their borders following an incident on Thursday in which 3 helicopters and some 20 Colombian policemen entered Venezuelan territory, it was officially reported here today. According to initial explanations from Bogota, the three aircraft and their crews, composed of members of Colombia's National Police, were engaged in a sweeping antidrug operation that ended spectacularly with the seizure of 1,043 kg of cocaine and 9,980 kg of marijuana. This report was submitted to Caracas by Colombian Ambassador Alberto Zalamea after receiving an official Venezuelan protest note from Foreign Minister Isidro Morales Paul.

The Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Ministry reported that the incident took place Thursday at 2100 GMT at Castilletes, 500 km northwest of Caracas in a small Venezuelan bay at Guajira Peninsula, on the border between the two countries. The delimitation of the surface and subsurface sea areas of the two countries off Guajira Peninsula is still pending.

Ambassador Zalamea explained that the two helicopters were on a mission between Punta Gallinas and Castilletes when they flew across the border and landed on a small airstrip which is under construction by the local Venezuelan agency of the Zulia Development Corporation. He added that the helicopters' occupants questioned the Venezuelan personnel there, but returned to Colombian territory when they learned that they were on Venezuelan territory. "These aircraft belong to the police, who are not quite familiar with the area," Zalamea said.

The greatest source of rancor over the incident in Venezuela is the fact that the Colombian police questioned the Venezuelan personnel at the airport for approximately 20 minutes. "There will be an investigation of this. We never intended to go across the border," the diplomat asserted. He said he hoped the incident does not affect relations between Bogota and Caracas and, on the contrary, yields positive results such as the signing of an agreement to fight drug trafficking that "will spell out the rules on pursuing criminals in border areas."

The Venezuelan and Colombian Armed Forces coordinate their operations in the fight against drug trafficking and other crimes along their long land borders. However, this is the first time that an incident like that on Thursday has occurred, particularly in the Gulf of Guajira. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Morales Paul also voiced the hope that such an agreement would be signed. "It would be welcome because it would help prevent future incidents like this and would permit more direct cooperation between the two governments," he stated.

"We are not characterizing the incident in any way. This is an action that has elicited a reaction from the Venezuelan Government, but we must look at it calmly because errors can very well happen and that is why we have asked for an investigation," he said. "We cannot jump to conclusions or blow this incident out of proportion. We will look at it calmly and wait for the results of the investigation that will be carried out, as well as the report that must be presented to the Venezuelan Government." He said, however, that the Venezuelan protest "is not disproportionate," because this incident involved 3 helicopters and 20 policemen who spent approximately 20 minutes in Venezuelan territory, even though Venezuelan officials repeatedly told them that they were on our territory.